

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

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FM AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8513

INFO EC COLLECTIVE PRIORITY 15

C O N F I D E N T I A L THE HAGUE 3710

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINR, ECIN, EEC, NL

SUBJECT: JOOP DEN UYL: NEW PRESIDENT OF EC-9 COUNCIL OF
MINISTERS

REF: THE HAGUE 3685

1. ON JULY 12, DUTCH PRIME MINISTER JOHANNES (JOOP) DEN UYL
WILL CHAIR HIS FIRST MEETING AS PRESIDENT OF THE EC-9 COUNCIL
OF MINISTERS. THE REFTEL PROVIDED SOME INSIGHT INTO DEN UYL'S
VISION OF THE DUTCH EC PRESIDENCY. THIS CABLE ATTEMPTS TO
PROVIDE SOME BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS OF THE MAN WHO, IN ADDITION
TO PRESIDING OVER THE MEETINGS OF HIS FELLOW HEADS OF GOVERNMENT,
WILL ACT AS THEIR SPOKESMAN IN BRUSSELS AND LATER IN THE YEAR
IN THE HAGUE.

2. EC WATCHERS WHO HAVE BECOME USED TO THE URBANE GASTON THORN'S
PRESIDENCY SHOULD BE PREPARED FOR AN OPTICAL CHANGE WHEN JOOP
DEN UYL MOVES ONTO THE STAGE. MORE OFTEN THAN NOT RUMPLED AND
DISHEVELED, LOOKING AS IF HE SLEPT IN HIS SUIT, AND WITH ASHES
FROM HIS EVER-PRESENT SMALL CIGAR DROPPING AROUND, DEN UYL
SCARECELY LOOKS THE PART OF A STATESMAN. LURKING BEHIND THAT
FACADE, HOWEVER, IS A FIRST-RATE MIND, A CLEVER POLITICIAN,
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AND A MAN WHO IS A GLUTTON FOR WORK AND SEEMINGLY CAN DO WITHOUT

SLEEP.

3. DEN UYL HAS BEEN PRIME MINISTER SINCE MAY 1973 WHEN THE CURRENT DUTCH LEFT-CONFESSONAL CABINET WAS SWORN IN AFTER THE LONGEST CABINET FORMATION PERIOD IN HISTORY. "CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD" OF A FIVE-PARTY COALITION GOVERNMENT, HE HAS EASILY BEEN THE DOMINANT FIGURE IN DUTCH POLITICS DURING THE PAST THREE YEARS. HIS SKILLS AS A FORGER OF COMPROMISES HAVE BEEN SEVERELY TESTED DURING THE PERIOD, BUT UNTIL NOW HE HAS BEEN EQUAL TO THE TASK OF HOLDING HIS CABINET TOGETHER.

4. AN ECONOMIST WHO SERVED AS MINISTER FOR ECONOMICS IN THE MID-1960'S, DEN UYL IS MOST INTERESTED IN AND AT HIS BEST WHEN DEALING WITH ECONOMIC SUBJECTS. SPEAKING TO A LABOR PARTY CONGRESS LAST YEAR HE SAID: "I AM AN ECONOMIST. THE FIGHT AGAINST UNEMPLOYMENT, THE FIGHT FOR EMPLOYMENT FOR EVERYONE WHO WANTS TO WORK IS SOMETHING THAT KEEPS ME BUSY EVERY DAY. I FEEL DEFEATED WHEN I HAVE TO ADMIT THAT IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO KEEP EVERYONE EMPLOYED WHEN WORLD TRADE DECLINES." HIS CONCERN FOR THE LITTLE MAN AND HIS DEDICATION TO SOCIALIST PRINCIPLES CAME THROUGH LATER IN THAT SPEECH WHEN HE STATED HIS COMMITMENT TO LABOR PARTY GOALS "TO DEFEND THE WEAK, THE COMMON PEOPLE, TO PROMOTE THE DISTRIBUTION OF INCOME, KNOWLEDGE AND POWER, AND TO ADJUST STRUCTURES SO THAT IDEAS ABOUT EQUALITY AND A MORE OPEN SOCIETY CAN DEVELOP." DURING THE DUTCH EC PRESIDENCY, DEN UYL IS LIKELY TO FOCUS A GREAT PART OF HIS ATTENTION ON ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. HOWEVER, HE HAS BEEN INTIMATELY INVOLVED IN DUTCH, AND BY EXTENSION EUROPEAN, POLITICS FOR THE LAST TWO DECADES AND CAN ACQUIT HIMSELF WELL WITH ANY OF HIS PEERS ON MOST TOPICS THAT THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS IS LIKELY TO DISCUSS. IF HE HAS ANY REAL SHORTCOMING, IT MAY BE IN THE FIELD OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS WHICH, UNDER THE DUTCH CONSTITUTION IS SOLELY THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS. BUT HE HAS WORKED CLOSELY WITH HIS LABOR PARTY COLLEAGUE FOREIGN MINISTER VAN DER STOEL AND HAS INCREASED HIS KNOWLEDGE IN THIS AREA, TOO, SINCE BECOMING PRIME MINISTER. HIS NATURAL CAUTION WHEN MAKING PUBLIC STATEMENTS WILL PROBABLY KEEP HIM WITHIN LIMITS AGREED UPON BY THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS WHEN HE DEALS WITH THE PRESS FOLLOWING SUMMIT MEETINGS.

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5. BLESSED (HIS DUTCH CABINET COLLEAGUES MIGHT SAY CURSED) WITH A PRODIGIOUS APPETITE FOR WORK, DEN UYL WILL COME TO HEADS OF GOVERNMENT MEETINGS WELL PREPARED ON SUBSTANCE. HE HAS THE ENDURANCE OF AN OX AND A DEMONSTRATED PROCLIVITY IN RUNNING THE DUTCH GOVERNMENT FOR CONDUCTING CABINET MEETINGS INTO THE EARLY HOURS OF THE MORNING. ONE OF HIS CABINET COLLEAGUES HERE HAS DESCRIBED DEN UYL TO US AS POSSESSING ENORMOUS "CONTROLLED VITALITY", AND A TALENT FOR NEVER WASTING HIS ENERGY BUT CON-

CENTRATING IT WHERE IT IS MOST NEEDED AND EFFECTIVE. HE WILL OBVIOUSLY NOT BE ABLE TO RUN EC-9 HEADS OF GOVERNMENT MEETINGS AS HE DOES THOSE OF THE DUTCH CABINET, BUT WE WOULD NOT BE SURPRISED TO SEE THEM STRETCH OUT A BIT. DEN UYL, AT LEAST, WILL NOT BE THE FIRST TO CALL IT QUILTS BECAUSE OF EXHAUSTION.

6. ALTHOUGH CAST IN THE ROLE OF EC-9 SPOKESMAN, DEN UYL IS ENOUGH THE REALIST TO RECOGNIZE THAT HIS COLLEAGUES FROM THE UK, FRG, FRANCE AND ITALY ARE THE STARS IN THE COMMUNITY AND ARE LIKELY TO ATTRACT MORE ATTENTION FROM THE PRESS THAN HE IS. HE IS NOT WITHOUT AMBITION HIMSELF AND ENJOYS THE LIMELIGHT, BUT WE DOUBT THAT HE WILL TRY TO TAKE MORE OF THE STAGE THAN IS HIS BY VIRTUE OF HIS POSITION AS CHAIRMAN. IT IS OUR IMPRESSION THAT DEN UYL IS LOOKING FORWARD TO HIS SIX MONTHS IN THE CHAIR WITH ENTHUSIASM AND WITH A DEDICATION TO AT LEAST ACHIEVING SOME PROGRESS ON THE ISSUES BEFORE THE COMMUNITY.
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